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AUTHOR Turner, Benjamin F.
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ABSTRACT

This planning guide begins with a working definition of "magnet school" and then gives short descriptions of six sample types of elementary level magnet programs: a fundamental or academic prep school, a Montessori school, a music academy, an earth science school or environmental center, a bilingual-multicultural magnet, and a fine arts academy. This is followed by materials, organized under the headings "objectives," "activities," and "evidence of effort," on developing a plan to organize and implement magnet schools so as to fulfill Board of Education goals, select staff, enroll students, develop an effective school, set achievement standards, and involve parents. A final section offers advice about designing an evaluation of a magnet program. A bibliography lists helpful sources of information about magnet schools. (CMG)

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MAGNET SCHOOLS

A Planning Guide For Elementary Schools

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MAGNET SCHOOLS:
A PLANNING GUIDE FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Developed by
Benjamin F. Turner

Disseminated by
KEDS Desegregation Assistance Center
College of Education
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio 44242
(216) 672-2828

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This document was prepared with your schools in mind. Feel free to adopt and adapt any of its contents to fit your specific needs. Remember activities should flow from objectives and evaluation should be the test of whether the objectives have been met.

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BFT

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MAGNET SCHOOLS: A PLANNING GUIDE
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MAGNET SCHOOLS: A PLANNING GUIDE

A A Working Definition:

A magnet school is a learning center that focuses upon areas of special interest, ability, or need. It is a school or program designed to attract students who demonstrate talent, ability, interest, need or who desire a different type of schooling. Magnet schools should apply the highest standard of education to a very specific area. They should attract students from all sections of the district by offering a type of instruction not available anywhere else in the school district.

Magnet schools have been viewed as an important component in the desegregation process. Unlike mandatory assignments, parents and students are offered an option and/or an alternative.

This viewpoint has led to nationwide attention and conditional acceptance of magnet schools. Many reports indicate that magnet school development may be a proper procedure for de-emphasizing compulsary desegregation and encouraging voluntary plans to accomplish educational equity and excellence.

Magnet schools are premised on the belief that the quality of education is the real issue and if quality is stressed in a given school, then blacks and whites will choose to attend that school.

The design of magnet schools rely on unique and unusual features to attract students, for example:

1. Programs are tailored to the student by choice, by need, by talent.
2. Students are selected (not everyone is admitted).
3. Additional resources beyond per pupil expense may be required.
4. Parent commitment to higher standards may be negotiated.
5. The school is in a state of experiment until approved by the state department of education

Magnet school programs and program choices may be influenced by the community in which they are contemplated—for example:

1. parent and community interest/support for one specialty area over another.
2. availability of certified instructors in a specialty area.
3. physical facilities requiring legal approval.
4. transportation arrangements may require additional expense for elementary students.
5. availability of a critical mass of students in a given specialty area at any given time.

Care should be taken to insure that magnet schools will be organized and operated as an integral part of the school district. They should never be used to track students by ability or to deny access to learning opportunities based upon race, sex, national origin, economic status or residential location.

When magnet schools are introduced into the school system, all plans and actions must be consistent with the policies adopted by its Board—grade structure, staffing, hiring and firing practices, staff training, course offerings, admission requirements, etc.—all must conform to Board policy.

A review of the literature suggests that there have been very few thorough and/or comprehensive evaluations of magnet schools. The research community needs to be encouraged to design studies that will help educators, parents, and the public to understand what magnet schools are, what magnets can contribute to educational excellence and equity, what are their limitations.

As magnet programs are developed for the district, it is important to document the process and to use that documentation as a basis for problem identification, problem solving, and future planning.

B Magnet Program Options for Elementary Students

Elementary magnet schools tend to restrict program specialty areas because of limited experience of primary school students. While some magnets begin at kindergarten or first grade, others will begin specializing after the third grade. The first three grades emphasize mastery of basic skills.

The decision about grade structure should be carefully considered and based upon sound educational practice.

A sample of program descriptions.

1. School "A" calls itself a Fundamental or Academic Prep School.
   It stresses basic instruction in reading, language and mathematics through a traditional style of instruction, which emphasizes structure, organization, and discipline. Traditional American values in education, patriotism, brotherhood, dignity, pride, and respect for self and others will be stressed.

2. School "B" calls itself a Montessori school.
   It describes its program as extremely rigid while allowing for the natural development of children using materials that provide within each, learning habits which include independence, responsibility, coordination, order and concentration in order to develop academic competency. This internationally acclaimed approach for early childhood education will utilize guidelines for Montessori teachers, received in training, and provide those activities inherent in the didactic materials and specific curriculum areas for each child at his/her level.

3. School "C" calls itself a Music Academy.
   In addition to basic studies, the curriculum will provide a primary music program with specialists providing music instruction. These activities will correlate and reinforce skills in other subject areas.

   String instruction will be provided at the primary level as an elective for pupils with interest and ability. Thirty (30) minute daily lessons will be provided students working in small groups.

   Students in the intermediate grades will participate in instrumental music such as band, piano and guitar. Lessons will be provided for every third-grade student utilizing an electronic piano lab and small group instruction. Small group instruction in piano will be provided interested students in grades four through six as an elective.

4. School "D" is described as an Earth Science School or Environmental Center.
An environmental lab and greenhouse have been set up to interface the curriculum by having students involved in activities that address themselves to man and his environment, both the humanities and physical sciences. These students will have additional field trips, demonstrations, experiments, and resource people. Ecology will be taught as part of the Science, Health, Safety, and Social Studies classes and will be coordinated with Art, Reading, and Language Arts.

5. School "E" describes itself as a Bilingual-Multicultural Magnet.
It addresses the needs of a district with a high concentration of hispanic and non-English speaking students.

   a) The regular basic skills program with a strong Social Science program emphasizing multicultural studies. Bilingual (English-Spanish) instruction will be provided as needed as part of the regular program.

   b) An ESL (English As A Second Language) Center where Kindergarten through sixth-grade students with limited or no English speaking ability whose native language is other than Spanish and students grades two through six with limited or no English speaking ability whose native language is Spanish are entered into an ESL component.

6. School "F" describes itself as a Fine Arts Academy where programs of high interest activities are designed to attract multi-ethnic groups in order to overcome racial imbalance.

   Homeroom teachers work in grade-level teams; each specializes in teaching one of the basic curriculum subjects (reading, arithmetic, language arts, social studies).

   Specialist teachers provide instruction in fine arts, foreign language, science, music, and physical education. Each child has several different teachers each day. The inclusion of specialist teachers on the faculty permits team planning time to be scheduled during school hours.

C A Specific Plan for Magnet Schools

A major administrative function is to develop a plan, method, process, procedure, practice for organization and implementation of magnet schools that fulfill the goals as stated through Board policy.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
1. Given proper authorization and authority, the administration will develop a comprehensive plan for magnet schools. Such a plan will be based upon *a)* the expressed interests, needs and desires of the community. *b)* the resources available to the community. *c)* proper utilization of existing facilities. *d)* cost efficiency that may result from consolidating and specializing in certain programs.	1.1 A Planning Committee will be formed, consisting of: -District Administrators -Teachers -Parents -Students -Community Members -State Department of Education Officials	1.1.1 Minutes of the various meetings and names of the participants will be kept. The contributions and advice from the various groups will be reflected in the final design.
	1.2 The Planning Committee will design specific rules and regulations in all areas. For example: school mission grade structure staffing curriculum content learning expectations admission requirements.	1.2.1 Planning documents submitted to and approved by school board. 1.2.2 Plans will be presented for public/parent review and reaction. Parent-Teacher-Student contracts will be developed.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
1.A Given a comprehensive description and clearly stated goals, a magnet schools curriculum will be developed.	1.1.A Curriculum development activities are outlined as follows: *a)* Set up curriculum advisory council. *b)* Develop instructional sequence. *c)* Specify learning outcomes. *d)* Check compliance standards with state department of education, with master contract, with board policy. *e)* Select appropriate texts and material. *f)* Develop procedures for articulation with pre/post magnet experiences. *g)* Prepare descriptions of magnet program.	1.1.1A A mission statement and curriculum outline will be prepared and submitted to superintendent for approval and submission to school board.
1.B Given a thorough and efficient magnet plan, required financial support will be provided.	1.1.B Develop a budget plan. Determine and detail budget requirements. Set up line item expenditures for fund accounts. Submit for approval.	1.1.1B Budget document is submitted and approved by superintendent and school board.

D Selecting the Staff for the Magnet School

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
2. Given proper personnel procedure, the principal and staff of the proposed magnet school will be identified and assigned. a) where possible, the prospective principal should be released for in-depth planning and preparation. -Sets goals, prioritizes -Develops performance standards and appraises performance of staff -Negotiates work groups -Maintains proper inventories -Builds budget, plans and cost reductions and expansion for approval -Organizes work group activity -Selects, orients, trains, staff -Monitors assessment data for differential impact by race -Legitimates curriculum development within State laws -Sets safety standards -Sets building standards within the law	2.1 All District professional staff members will be given the opportunity to apply for teaching positions at each Magnet School. Prospective staff must display a high commitment to scholarship and preparation, a devotion to helping children learn and grow, a willingness to work closely and cooperatively with parents.	2.1.1 By _____Magnet School staff will be selected and notified of assignments.
	2.2 Staff selection should honor master contract and the process should be clearly understood by all. a) Identify and List Personnel Needs b) Write Position Descriptions Certificated Civil Service c) Advertise Positions as Necessary d) Develop Selection Criteria e) Review Qualifications of Applicants f) Interview Best-Qualified Applicants g) Recommend Personnel Transactions h) Present Recommendations to Board of Education i) Process Personnel Transactions j) Inform Persons Selected	2.2.1 The entire interview and selection procedure will be documented and analyzed for further refinements. The records of successful candidates will be analyzed and compared.

E Training the Staff

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
3.0 Given proper staff development, all staff members will improve their abilities to structure effective learning situations aimed at eliminating teaching practices based upon faulty assumptions about children's learning capabilities.	3.1 STAFF DEVELOPMENT The Superintendent and the Director of Elementary Services will design and lead staff development components for this program. Where possible technical assistance should be sought from the state department, colleges and universities.	3.1.1 Data will be collected from the participants about the effectiveness of the sessions, both immediately following the sessions and again in mid year and end of year after the opportunity to implement the ideas. Teacher lesson plans and teacher evaluation records will be examined for evidence of in-service ideas.
3.0.2 Based upon the district's goals for magnet schools, staff development will focus on: a) Enlisting parental involvement and participation. b) Eliminating the harmful effects of ethnic racial intolerance. c) Implementing staff and student rules and regulations. d) Refining curriculum objectives—learning outcomes. e) Developing individualized education. f) Refining reporting procedures to students and parents — understanding the purpose of the educational contract. g) Using multiethnic, multiracial and sex fair materials and practices.	3.2 The above personnel and other central administrators should accomplish four major activities: a) Identify and satisfy staff training needs for Principal, Coordinators, Teachers, Aides, etc. b) Develop plan for ongoing inservice activities. c) Develop timelines of activities and content. d) Develop evaluation procedures.	3.2.2 All components of the staff development plan will be submitted to the superintendent for approval prior to implementation.
	3.3 Between _____ and _____ at least 45 hours of inservice meetings will be held with the Magnet School staff in preparation for opening in September and in maintaining standards of excellence throughout the year.	3.3.1 Documentation of a) Teacher reaction checklists. b) Initial lesson plans. c) Teaching tools (requests). d) Organizing for delivery.

F Enrolling Students in the Magnet School

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
4. Given proper procedures and basis for admission, the appropriate number of students will be enrolled in the magnet school.	4.1 STUDENT SELECTION Establish Qualifications Establish Application Procedures and Prepare Forms Distribute Application Materials to Schools Establish Application Control Procedures Process Applications Interview Applicants Select Students	4.1.1 ENROLLMENT Data and applications will be collected, organized and analyzed.
	The racial, ethnic and gender composition of the Magnet School will be approximately ☐ black, ☐ white, ☐ hispanic (reflect school district percentage).	4.1.2 The racial and ethnic composition of the student body will be analyzed and reported.
	4.2 Students attending the particular Magnet School will be required to abide by defined rules and regulations in the areas of: appearance, attendance, homework, discipline. Students and parents will sign contracts agreeing to the defined rules and regulations.	4.2.1 Signed contracts placed on file.
	4.3 Parent-Teacher-Student Contracts will be prepared by the Planning committee based on 4.2.	4.3.1
	4.4 Committee members will assist in obtaining the necessary signatures.	4.4.1
	4.5 Meetings will be held with the Advisory Committee, the Board of School Directors, parents, students, teachers, administrators.	4.5.1 The contractual process will be recorded and data will be collected and analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the contractual plan.

G Developing an Effective Magnet School

The mission of _____ is to develop an effective integrated school environment which is evidenced by:

a) mastery of basic skills for all students.
b) high expectations for all students demonstrated thru measurable achievement.
c) teaching and learning strategies that are student centered, motivational, academically relevant and responsive to frequent monitoring of student progress.
d) ability of staff to implement instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students.
e) positive learning climate.
f) parent/community involvement that will support the mission.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
5.0 Given a responsive environment, the Magnet School will maintain quality assurance and provide motivation and reinforcement as a "holding power" to every learner. The atmosphere is free from threats of physical harm and is conducive to teaching and learning.	5.1 The Magnet School's environment will encourage the learner to take the initiative. The environment—whether man or machine—merely responds in a heuristic (guiding, discovering, revealing) and supportive way to the action of the learner.	5.1.1 Pre- and post-contract interviews between staff and parent/students with satisfactory results.
	5.2 The environment does not preclude preconceived specific learner objectives (District Learning Outcome), it merely insures that in the process of achieving these objectives the learner acts and reacts individually in the discovery process and thus learns by doing.	

H Setting Standards for Achievement

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
6.0 By the close of the project year 90% of the average students assigned will gain 1.2 months for each month of participation in the academic area of choice, 70% of the below average students assigned will gain 1 month for each month of participation in reading, 100% of the above average enrollment will gain 1.5 months for each month of participation in the academic area of choice.	6.1 All students will take standardized achievement tests in the fall. In addition, students will take a variety of diagnostic inventories to pinpoint specific strengths and weaknesses in the basic skills area. 6.2 all students will take standardized achievement tests in the Spring of 19__ and thereafter on a semiannual basis.	6.1.1 Standardized Test scores will be analyzed, compared and reported.
7.0 Given an exposure to a foreign language, 100% of the students will develop an awareness, an appreciation, and an understanding of diversities — social, religious, racial, and cultural differences in the student's community.	7.1 Establish and implement a language laboratory to help all students acquire the four (4) basic communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. -Demonstrate appreciation and interest in the culture of the country. -Demonstrate a basic knowledge of selected items of deep and formal culture. -Read at normal speed and reasonable comprehension and materials mastered orally during the second year of the sequence. -Write with reasonable accuracy when these materials are presented for guided writing.	7.1.1 A teacher checklist of proficiency in the four major skills. Reading Writing Speaking Computing 7.1.2 Progress reports. 7.1.3 Recitations — oral and written.

H Setting standards for achievement (continued)

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
8.0 100% of the students will be required to read twenty books during the school year.	8.1 Books will be atractively displayed not only in the library but throughout the building.	8.1.1 Number of books read by each pupil according to the teacher's record.
	8.2 The library will be accessible at all times while the building is open.	8.1.2 Catalog records will document the extent of books in evidence.
	8.3 Oral and written book reports will be required of all students.	8.1.3 Student records of books read will be diligently maintained and reported.
9.0 Given an extended school day, 85% of the students will pursue at least one special interest to successful completion according to a specific measure of accomplishment.	9.1 During the extended day, a study center will be provided for — -Independent study -Completion of homework assignments -Peer tutoring -Recreational reading -Opportunities for parent, teacher, pupil interaction -Co-curricular activities -Community exploration -Additional computer time in a special interest or remedial area.	9.1.1 The degree of student participation will be recorded as follows: *a)* The number of participants pursuing one area of special interest during the extended day. *b)* The number of participants pursuing one area of special interest during the regular day.

I Parent Involvement and Participation in the Magnet School

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE OF EFFORT
10. Given proper information, encouragement and the opportunity, parents and community will support the school and actively participate in its operation.	10.1 Principal and staff will develop plans and procedures to guarantee that: -There is an active parent group in the school that involves many parents. -There is a handbook for parents explaining the school's policies and programs. -The school has a system for providing parents with timely and appropriate information about student behavior good and bad. -Where appropriate, school communications are bilingual for non-English speaking parents. -The principal and/or staff appears before community groups to explain the school's program and encourage their support. -This school has a system which encourages responsible citizens to actively work with the schools. -Ninety to one-hundred percent of the parents attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences. -During parent-teacher conferences a major emphasis is given to improving student achievement. -Parents are encouraged to be responsible for books and supplies provided their children to improve learning. -Most parents would rate the school as a good place for their children to learn.	10.1.1 Documentation: Participation checklist Attendance Handbook Parent Handbook Record of translations Record of Public Appearances Surveys Interviews Questionnaires

I Evaluation Design

The evaluation of magnet schools should be consistent with the evaluation of other schools in the district. The key to an effective evaluation are the evaluation questions.

Example

Were the magnet program activities implemented as planned?

How effective were the activities in achieving the goals?

For which groups were the magnet schools most/least successful?

How did social and political factors influence the development of the magnet school?

What social and political effects did the magnet school have on the district?

How well was the magnet school managed?

What did the magnet school program cost?

How well did the magnet school program achieve its goals?

Appropriate responses to these questions will require:

-the development and implementation of the formative and summative evaluation designs detailed for each magnet school component;

-the development and implementation of systematic procedures for data collection and analysis within the timelines established for each magnet school/component;

-the identification and/or development and utilization of appropriate instrumentation for data collection, including tests, attitude surveys, interviews, on-site observation, examination of projects records, etc.;

-the development of systematic procedures for providing feedback from and to appropriate personnel during implementation.

HELPFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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CONCLUSION

KEDS, the Kent State Center for Educational Development provides technical assistance and training to public educators in the state of Ohio, and referral services to other agencies funded under the Title IV Civil Rights Act of 1964. The primary focus is race desegregation througn organizational and program development. Inquiries and request for assistance can be made to:

KEDS Desegregation Assistance Center
Third Floor, Wright Hall
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio 44242
(216) 672-2828

Technical Assistance is provided by KEDS Program Specialists:

Bernice Armour	—Staff Development
Robert Black	—Administrative Development
Herbert Herskowitz	—Curriculum Development
Theodore Paynther	—Human Relations
Benjamin Turner	—Director, Organizational Development

and the educational research and resources of the College of Education, Kent State University.

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